

Message Text

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S E C R E T TEHRAN 8717

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR PFOR UK (RAMSBOTHAM, SIR PETER)

SUBJ: UK AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE TO WASHINGTON:

SIR PETER RAMSBOTHAM

REF: STATE 238264

1. SIR PETER HAS SUBSTANTIALLY IMPROVED BRITAIN'S RELATIONS WITH IRAN SINCE HIS ARRIVAL IN TEHRAN IN JUNE 1971 DESPITE SUCCEEDING SIR DENIS WRIGHT WHO WAS MOST POPULAR HERE. WE AGREE WITH THE ASSESSMENT OF BRITISH EMBASSY OFFICERS THAT RAMSBOTHAM HAS GAINED THE SHAH'S CONFIDENCE. HE ALSO BECAME PARTICULARLY CLOSE TO COURT MINISTER ASSADOLLAH ALAM, WITH WHOM HE CLAIMS TO BREAKFAST ON A REGULAR BASIS. THIS MAY BE THE MANIFESTATION OF WHAT SOME IMPORTANT IRANIANS REFER TO AS ALAM'S PARTIALITY FOR THE BRITISH. RAMSBOTHAM WAS GREATLY AIDED BY THE SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME OF BRITISH-IRANIAN NEGOTIATIONS OVER THE GULF ISLANDS DISPUTE, WHILE HIS OWN EFFORTS SOFTENED TRADITIONAL PERSIAN SUSPICIONS OF BRITAIN AT A TIME WHEN BRITISH POWER WAS RECEDING AND IRANIAN POWER WAXING IN THE PERSIAN GULF AREA. IN HIS PERSONAL AND OFFICIAL STYLE, THE OUTGOING BRITISH AMBASSADOR HAS SHREWDLY EXPLOITED TO HIS COUNTRY'S BENEFIT THE CONTINUING MYSTIQUE WHICH ATTACHES TO BRITAIN IN THIS COUNTRY DESPITE BRITAIN'S REDUCED CIRCUMSTANCES.

2. SIR PETER IS BRIGHT, ENERGETIC AND VOLUBLE. HE WORKS

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HARD, MASTERS THE DETAILS, AND MOVES QUICKLY WHEN HE WANTS

TO MAKE A POINT, REGISTER A DEMARCHE OR FILL IN AN IRANIAN OFFICIAL ON DEVELOPMENTS OF MUTUAL INTEREST. HE QUICKLY GRASPS THE ESSENTIALS OF A SITUATION. HE HAS A TENDENCY TO TALK OVERLY MUCH. AT TIMES THIS CAN BE USEFUL -- ESPECIALLY AT SOCIAL FUNCTIONS. HE IS ADEPT, AS MANY ENGLISH ARE, IN FILLING A VOID IN A CONVERSATION BY SPEAKING AT LENGTH AND REALLY NOT SAYING VERY MUCH. THIS SOMETIMES CARRIES OVER INTO OFFICIAL DISCUSSIONS. HE ALWAYS SEEMS TO BE CHEERFUL AND SELF-POSSESSED AND SOME ATTRIBUTE THIS TO THE FACT HE TAKES SERIOUSLY HIS UNDOUBTED ARISTOCRATIC CREDENTIALS. HE WAS FRIENDS AT ETON WITH LORD CARRINGTON AND LORD CROMER. HE CONTENTS THAT HE WAS THE SERIOUS STUDENT AMONG THE THREE OF THEM.

3. THE RAMBOTHAMS ENTERTAIN FREQUENTLY AND WELL AND IN THE RELATIVELY SHORT SPACE OF TIME THEY HAVE BEEN HERE, THEY HAVE SEEN A LOT OF IRAN AND HAVE DEVELOPED A WIDE CIRCLE OF FRIENDS WHO COUNT IN THIS COUNTRY. BOTH SPEAK GOOD FRENCH. HE IS A BIRD-WATCHER.

4. AS FOR SIR PETER'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE U.S., HE HAS BEEN UNFAILINGLY COOPERATIVE IN SHARING INFORMATION AND ASSESSMENTS WITH US AND EXCEPT FOR AREAS WHERE THERE IS NATURAL COMPETITION SUCH AS COMMERCIAL AND MILITARY SALES TO IRAN, HE HAS WORKED CLOSELY WITH US. HE IS OBVIOUSLY DELIGHTED ABOUT HIS ASSIGNMENT TO WASHINGTON, AND HAS EVERY INTENTION OF KEEPING A LOW PROFILE UNTIL HE FINDS HIS WAY AROUND.

5. THE RAMSBOTHAMS HAVE SONS BORN IN 1943 AND 1949 AND A DAUGHTER BORN IN 1945. THE LATTER WAS TRAGICALLY PARALYZED IN AN AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT FOUR YEARS AGO. LADY RAMSBOTHAM USUALLY SPENDS TWO OR THREE MONTHS EACH SUMMER IN ENGLAND WITH HER DAUGHTER.
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